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Globe Coverage Of JFK Killing Only Obfuscates

By R.D. Rosen

This past spring, a dozen Boston *Globe* editors invited three local John F. Kennedy assassination theorists and researchers to an executive lunch. David Williams and Michael Ghee of the Assassination Information Bureau in Cambridge, and Carl Oglesby showed the assembled editors a print of the Zapruder film of the assassination and presented, over the course of three hours, evidence that Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone and that there was more than one gunman involved in the Dallas tragedy.

The editors were sufficiently impressed by what they heard and saw to assign a *Globe* staffer, national reporter Jack Thomas, to the assassination story full-time with what has amounted to an unlimited budget. Thomas was directed to investigate three major areas: the Zapruder film, the allegedly missing brain of the slain President, and the spectrographic and neutron-activation analyses of the Dallas bullets.

The *Globe's* decision to cover the assassination story may have aroused hope among conspiracy students that the events in Dallas in 1963 might receive further clarification, but Thomas's lengthy feature story in the Sunday *Globe* of June 29 makes it clear that the issues, as far as that paper is concerned, will only be further obfuscated.

In his lead story to the two-page spread entitled "Who Killed John F. Kennedy?" Thomas reports, quite rightly, that "another difficulty in analyzing the Kennedy assassination is the volume of information and the fact that misinformation about the assassination is growing faster than information." The problem is that Thomas himself is guilty of a startling and curious succession of omissions, evasions and half-truths. Here are some of them.

- Thomas states that "in the past few months . . . critics of the Warren Commission have obtained a pirated copy of the film . . ." In fact, certain critics have possessed bootlegged copies since 1964, and it has been relatively widely distributed since the late '60s.

- Thomas states, "The Warren Commission conducted exhaustive interviews and concluded Ruby had acted alone. A lie detector test confirmed the commission's findings." What Thomas leaves out is the fact that, inside the

Dallas county jail in 1964, Ruby asked Earl Warren if the Commission would take him to Washington to testify. Warren said, "I beg your pardon." "Gentlemen," Ruby continued, "unless you take me to Washington, you can't get a fair shake out of me. If you understand my way of talking . . . Gentlemen, my life is in danger here . . . But by delaying minutes, you lose the chance. And all I want to do is tell the truth, and that is all . . . Now maybe certain people don't want to know the truth that may come out of me. Is that plausible?" Ruby was left in Dallas, so it can hardly

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be said that the Commission's conclusion was conclusive. When asked why he had omitted mention of Warren's refusal to provide Ruby with a safe place to speak out, Thomas replied, "I'm aware of that fact, but I chose to include what I thought was relevant."

- In discussing ex-CIA computer analyst George O'Toole's use of a device called the Psychological Stress Evaluator that indicated Oswald was telling the truth when he was recorded saying "I didn't shoot anybody, no sir," Thomas attempts to point out the PSE's faults. Among them, he writes, is that it remains controversial and has not yet been accepted as reliable by either the CIA or the FBI. Relying on the final judgments of the CIA and the FBI in this matter, is, in essence, appealing to the very agencies that might potentially have much to lose if the PSE's findings are correct. When asked why he would rely on the endorsements of the CIA and FBI and not bother to cite responsible supporters of the PSE (retired and highly respected army polygraph expert L.H. Hitchcock, for one), Thomas responded: "Your category of responsible authorities differs from mine."

- Thomas discusses the so-called "magic bullet theory." Warren Commission critics argue that the same bullet could not have passed through Kennedy's neck, Connally's torso and wrist, and finally have snuggled into the Governor's thigh. (If, in fact, it could not have, there would have to have been a second gunman). But ballistics evidence and an exam-

ination of the Zapruder film show this to be virtually impossible, many argue. The alleged "super bullet" was recovered almost intact in Parkland Hospital; an identical bullet test-fired into the wrist of a cadaver suffered radical deformations. Thomas labels the critics' evidence "Myth" and counterposes what he calls "Facts." One of his facts is the Commission's finding that the bullet's velocity slowed from 1858 to 1500 feet per second between the time it entered Kennedy's neck and when it exited from Connally's chest.

"The test with the cadaver showed," writes Thomas, "that if the bullet had not slowed down, it probably would have been mangled in passing through Connally's wrist." Not only is this not a fact — it's merely an hypothesis. Thomas believes that conjecture can have the status of truth. Furthermore, if army tests had determined the bullet's velocity, all the army had to do was fire a new bullet at the diminished speed into a cadaver's wrist. This they evidently didn't do.

• Thomas cites the Warren Commission testimony of a Marine Corps rifle expert that, with the awkward 1940 Mannlicher-Carcano allegedly employed by Oswald, hitting the President from the Texas School Book Depository's sixth floor was "a very easy shot." Thomas ignores a test conducted for the Commission by an FBI marksman in which, with the Mannlicher-Carcano, he could fire only three shots during the 5.6 seconds that elapsed from the first to the last shot in Dallas, and this at top speed without time for accurate aiming. Thomas likewise ignores the testimony of Marine Lieut. Col. A. J. Folsom, who said that Oswald was "a rather poor shot."

"Maybe by Marine standards," Thomas, an ex-Marine reserve with target training himself, told the *Phoenix*. "The only thing that surprises me is that * Oswald missed once." This last statement lies in the face of all responsible assassination re-

search and indicates, most unfortunately for those *Globe* readers who had hoped for fair and open-minded coverage of the assassination, that Thomas has already made up his mind.

"Does this mean that it is your conclusion that Oswald did all the shooting by himself?" the *Phoenix* asked Thomas.

"Yes, it does," he replied.

"And you have come across nothing in your research to contradict that belief?"

"No, I haven't."

Almost ironically, the editors of the *Globe*, stirred by the Assassination Information Bureau's presentation several months ago, have delivered the controversial subject into the hands of a reporter who is intent on defending the findings of the Warren Report, who parrots them in his stories instead of pursuing both old and new evidence that Oswald did not act alone and very likely was a US intelligence operative. Thomas is hamstrung by an *a priori* belief in official authority and by an inability or unwillingness to perceive even the least obscure outlines of conspiracy.

David Williams of the AIB now feels that Thomas, who has spoken frequently with them to obtain new leads, was "stringing me along. The whole tone of the *Globe* piece dampens serious consideration of the issues."

"Thomas is guilty of the sort of laziness," says Bob Katz of the AIB, "that prevents the media from paying serious attention to the issues. He's chosen to become a sort of sportswriter in describing the ongoing feud between the critics and defenders of the Warren Commission Report, rather than knuckling down and coming up with independent conclusions."

"Thomas seemed to have a normal brain," Carl Oglesby remarks, "and he seemed to use it in a normal way. Now we have to entertain a new hypothesis: that the *Globe* has opened the investigation in its pages only to close it more definitively." Whether or not the *Globe* really intends to muffle, perhaps even asphyxiate, the conspiracy researchers, its coverage of the Kennedy assassination is too naive to be of much use.

* How ASinine!